CERTAINE REASONS TENDING TO PROVE THE unlawfulnes and inexpediency of all Dioceſan Epiſcopacy (*even the moſt moderate.*)

TOGETHER WITH ſome needfull points ſuddenly *ſuggeſted conſidering the ſeaſon.*

Vntill by the good providence of God a more full and mature diſ*courſe may be prepared and publiſh*ed (if need ſo require) by ſome better hand:

Wiſedome is juſtified of her Children.

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THERE IS A CERTIANE AND perfect platforme of Christian Church government set downe by Christ and his Apostles in the New Testament.

Position. 1.

IN the Christian church government, some things are substantiall, and they are particularly and expresly set downe in the New Testament. Others are circumstantiall, which are only concluded under some generall rules sufficient to direct the Church in ordering thereof; and from which therefore shee may not depart. Of these latter there is little doubt: Therefore omitting them, I proceed to prove the position as concerning the substantials in Church-government especially: And that by these reasons.

Reas. 1. Because all the severall kindes of Church offices and officers, called by the names of Presbyters, Bishops, Pastors, Teachers, Deacons, with their due qualifications, manner of vocation by election and ordination, together with all the Ministeriall duties in those offices, by them to be performed respectively as administration of the word, Sacraments and censures, with provision of the poore Saints, the due manner of performing of each of these, (at least for substance,

Acts 1. 13. & 6.3 6. and 13 1.2.3. and 14. 23, Rom. 12. 7. 8. 1. Cor. 12. 8. 1. Cor. 12. 28. Ephes. 4. 11. Phil. 1. 1. 1. Tim. 3. totum.

Tit. 1. 5. 7. 1. Cor. 5. totum. Matth. 18. 17 21. and 16. 19. Act. 15. 1, 22.

and ſo farre as the ſame is neceſſarie :) likewiſe their ſtations and places of reſiding, with the concurrence of diverſe Churches and presbyters together for their mutuall helpe, as need requires. I ſay becauſe all theſe are things ſubſtantiall in Church-government, and likewiſe all theſe are particularly and expreſſely ſet downe in the New Teſtament, as may partly appeare by the quotations in the Margent. And more then theſe, or ſuch as are neceſſarily included in them, are not ſubſtantiall in the outward government of the Church.

2. Sundrie texts of Scripture doe ſeeme plainly to owne this poſition, as 1. *Corinth.* 4. 17. *Timothie ſhall put you in remembrance of my wayes in Chriſt, how I teach in all the Churches.* By which place it ſeemes that *Paul* did teach unto, and in all the Churches, uniformely and alike certain wayes or practicall courſes in Chriſt, *i. e.* received by direction from Chriſt, and pertaining to his Kingdome: and beſides, thoſe mentioned in this Epiſtle, which *Timothy* ſhould more plainly ſhew unto the *Corinthians*; which, what could they be but matters of government, which, are here more ſcantly expreſſed, in other places more fully? In 1. *Tim.* 3. 15. The Apoſtle telleth *Timothy* that he wrote that Epiſtle to him, that *hee might know how to carrie himſelfe in the Church of God*: Therefore belike he doth there teach him points of government, as well as other things. And 1. *Tim.* 6. 21. *Hee bids him obſerve thoſe rules before given him* (*viz.* touching Church-government amongſt other things) without partialitie. And in the concluſion of the Epiſtle, 1. *Tim.* 6. 13, 14. Hee binds all that hee had before-ſaid with a ſtrict charge to keepe that commandement (*i. e.* commandements,

dements, the word beeing put *collectivè*) unſpotted *i. e.* unchanged unto the comming of Chriſt: which place the fautors of Dioceſan Epiſcopacie themſelves, doe not deny to bee underſtood concerning the commandements touching Diſcipline and government as well as Doctrine.

3. It is granted by all, that ſome ſubſtantiall parts of Church-government are expreſt in the New Teſtament, as ſome of the Officers and ſome of the Miniſteriall duties, and ſome things of their calling, *Et ſic de aliis*: Whence I inferre, that therefore all are ſet down; for elſe were the Scripture a rule defective, imperfect and ineffectuall for the end for which it was written; which was *to make the man of God perfect* (not to ſome) but *to every good worke*, 2. *Tim.* 3. 17. eſpecially to the worke of Governing the houſe of God, which is one of his chiefeſt workes, 1. *Tim.* 3. 16.

4. God by *Moſes* ſet downe a forme of government for the Jewiſh Church, much more hath Chriſt for the Chriſtian Church, *Hebr.* 3. 2.

5. Hee beeing Maſter of the houſe, upon whoſe ſhoulder the government is laid, *Eſay* 9. *Matth.* 28. 18. And being more faithfull then *Moſes* could be, in all things touching the houſe of God, which is his Church; For as for the civill State our Saviour never meddled with it.

Neither can any true reaſon be rendred why *Moſes* ſhould direct the Jewiſh Church, in a certaine forme of government, rather then Chriſt, the Chriſtian Church.

5, If it were not thus, there ſhould be no unitie in the government of the Churches, but infinite diverſitie; No certaintie, but Heſitation, and daily doubting,

ting whether men were right or wrong; No constancie, but continuall mutabilitie; Incase of any errour committed, there would bee no meanes, no hopes of rectifying them, if there were no rule: Or rather no possibilitie of doing either right or wrong therein, otherwise then by conformitie or inconformitie to the slipperie and unstable will of man.

6. The Church of God is his house, kingdome, Body, & he is compared to the inhabitant, King, & Head thereof, whose office, honour, and true propertie therefore it must needs be to give rules and laws to be observed, to appoint officers, and prescribe them their duties, and the manner of all their ministration in his owne House, and Kingdome, and over his owne Bodie, and not to permit the same to any other pleasure or discretion whatsoever.

7. The end of Church-government is spirituall and supernatural, viz. The edificatiõ of the Body of Christ in grace unto glorie, therefore the proper and direct meanes thereunto must be spirituall and supernaturall, and so must be the abilities to use rightly those means, & the blessing upon the same. But none is able to devise such means, nor furnish with such ablities, nor give such blessing, but God alone who appointed that end.

8. All proper and direct meanes of grace, are also proper parts of Gods immediate worship, and none may lawfully appoint but God himselfe, *Mand.* 2. But Church government (for the most part of the substantials) is a proper and a direct meanes of grace: As is manifest in the particulars mentioned before in the first reason. And therefore none may lawfull appoint the same but God himselfe.

9. Our adversaries, the Bishops, and their favorits, them-

themselves doe grant as much. Yea some of them do lay it as their basis whereon to build, and chiefe pillar whereby to uphold their Episcopacie, as well as sundrie other points pertaining to Church government common to them with us.

The Plat-forme of Christian Church-government set downe by Christ in the New Testament is unalterable, and perpetually bindeth all Christian churches to the end of the world. Position. 2.

Reas. 1. BEcause it was appointed by Christ, (the King of the Church) without limitation to any time or place, neither hath hee himselfe at any time abrogated it, nor given authoritie to any other so to doe. And without his authoritie how can or dare any man attempt to doe it? It is a common rule in reason it selfe, that whatsoever looseth, must bee either the same, or else a stronger and superiour to that, which before had bound.

2. If men without speciall warrant from Christ, may alter what government hee hath once set up, and set up that which hee never did binde men to it; then may they both binde the conscience, where hee hath loosed it, and loose it from that whereunto hee hath bound it; which none may doe, *Iam.* 4. 12.

3. There can be no sufficient reason given why the government devised by Christ himselfe, should give place, to another, by men; nor can it be done without unsufferable contumely against him. For what can it else imply, but an imputatiõ of some weaknes, or folly in him, or a wilfull neglect (if not contempt) of his fu-

ſupreme authoritie in us.

4. Church-government is a part of Chriſts Kingdome in and over his Church, and therefore hee neither may nor will quite, or lay downe the ſame, untill hee reſigne it up into the hands of his Father at the laſt day 1. *Corinth.* 15. 24.

5. The end and cauſe for which Church government was firſt appointed by God, (viz. The Churches conſervation and building up further in the ſtate of grace) remaines immutable, and why not then the proper and direct meanes thereof alſo, unleſſe God himſelfe had ſeene it good to alter the ſame?

6. The Scripture teſtifieth thus much, as in that of *Tim.* 6. 14. before mentioned, ratifying as well all matters of Diſcipline or government contained in that Epiſtle, as other things: And whereas *Epheſ.* 4. 11. 13. The Apoſtle ſaith, *God hath given Paſtours and Teachers to his Church untill wee all meet together &c.* Doth hee not plainly imply that their office is unalterable, and if their office, why not all other offices alſo? And if the offices bee perpetuall, why then is not their calling, Miniſteriall duties, the manner of their performance, and all other neceſſary appurtenances of their office unalterable alſo?

7. The Church is Chriſts Houſe, Kingdome, Bodie, Spouſe, therefore there is no reaſon, either that the Church ſhould take upon her to governe herſelfe, and ſo denie her due ſubjection to Chriſt, or elſe to preſume to erect a government in and over the ſame, beſides himſelfe, much leſſe to thruſt out the government by him erected.

8. If men may change it in part (I ſpeake ſtill of the ſubſtantials) then may they do it in whole. And

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so they might remove Pastors Teachers, &c. and put into their room all the orders of the popish Ministery; and make new censures, or have none at all. And if so, why not new Sacraments, and new Scriptures too.

9. In the institution of any divine ordinance, the first in use is ever the rule and measure of the rest to come after, unlesse God himself give other direction, as we see in the point of Marriage and the Lords Supper; and therefore, if any abuse arise, we are bid to look to the first institution to correct it by: therefore the first Christian Church-government which Christ by himself or his Apostles erected, remaines still, and shall do to the end of the World as our perfect patterne to walk by.

10. Other Divines, both Protestants and Papists, do acknowledge the same: and our adversaries especially, who freely grant our Thesis (though they differ from us in the Hypothesis. How else will they prove their Episcopall Government to be unalterable? And why else would they binde all men to swear never to consent to the altering of the same? But upon this ground (as they would bear us in hand) that their government was appointed by Christ and his Apostles, and therefore it is unalterable.

All other formes of Church-government which differ in substantials from that which Christ hath set down in the New-Testament (so far as they differ from it) are in themselves unlawfull; and by name the government of Diocesan Bishops amongst the rest. Position 3.

THe generall for the present shall be taken as *per se* apparent, upon supposition of the truth of the Note.

two former positions: Now touching Diocesan Epis-copacie in particular, though it were stripped of all civill honours and offices and whatsoever other accidentals and considered only according to the substance of it, and that which themselves claime *iure divino*, viz. 1. as a distinct Ecclesiasticall office from that of a Presbyter; 2. and superiour to it; 3. Having sole power of ordaining Ministers; 4. And sole power of jurisdiction both over all the Ministers and people within their Diocesse, and so by consequent to appoint officers, keep courts, and do all that is to be done for government within the same: I say considered only thus, yet is it in it self most unlawfull.

Reas. 1. Because it being reputed the highest and most necessary Ministery in the Church, yet it is no where mentioned in the New-Testament, though all other Ministries in the Church, even the least and lowest are therein particularly expressed, as is afore-said.

2. In all the New-Testament, a Bishop and an Elder or Presbyter are confounded as being two names of one and the same office, *Act.* 20, 17, 28. 1, *Tim* 3. 1, 7. *Tit.* 1, 5, 7. *Phil.* 1. 1. And therefore to make a Bishops office distinct in kinde from, and superiour unto (much more a Lord over) a Presbyters, is a prevarication.

3. Ordination and excommunication (two of the chiefest acts of Church-government) are never attributed in Scripture to one person alone (unlesse figuratively) but to many, a company, a society, which is usually called the Church, as *Act.* 6. 6. and 14. 23. and 13. 1, 2, 3. *Mat.* 18. 17. 1 *Cor.* 5, 4. 1 *Tim.* 4. 14.

therefore it is unlawfull for any one by his office to claim or exercise it alone.

4. It is generally confest (till now of late) by all sorts to be an office standing meerly *jure humano*, and not to be any divine ordinance: which if it be so, then again upon supposition of the truth of the two former positions, it must needs be unlawfull. Now that it stands only *jure humano*, we have the concurrent consent of ancient Fathers, moderne Protestants both forraigne and domestick, School-men, and other Popish Divines, both the laws canonicall and civill, Martyrs, most reformed Churches, Bishops themselves, and some of their best upholders, Kings and kingdomes or States, both our own and others; and lastly of the established laws and unviolated customes of our land, with other practises and proceedings amongst us here, concerning Bishops and their offices from time to time consonant thereunto, as if time serve, may more at large be proved.

5. The first mention we finde of Bishops as distinct from Presbyters, is not until about three hundred years after Christ; which also some of the Bishops own partie do not deny. And yet even then (for ought that doth appear) they had no authority over other Ministers, but ruled the Church only with them *in communi*.

6. If the œcumenicall Episcopacie of the Bishop of *Rome* be unlawfull, as no doubt it is, then cannot Diocesan Episcopacie be lawfull; this being built upon no better grounds then that, and in a proper consideration, there being no other difference between them, but *majus* and *minus*, that that is the greater, and this the lesse evil.

Position 3. *The least and most moderate Episcopacie (as distinct from and superiour unto the office of Presbyters) is both in it self unlawfull, and also unto us dangerous: and therefore not to be admitted.*

Note. GRanting that the grand Episcopacie (now in being) should be parted and pulled down so low, as that the Bishops should have nothing left them, but only (as some have projected) first a good benefice with cure of soules, whereto they should be tyed, and which they should diligently feed as other ordinary Pastors; Secondly, very small Dioceses; Thirdly, the name Bishop peculiar to themselves: Forthly, to ordaine Ministers in their Dioceses, but not without concurrence of other Ministers; Fifthly, and by their advice and assistance to order lesser matters in the severall congregations of Assemblies. Sixtly, and in Assemblies or publique meetings of Presbyteries, classes, &c. to be constant Moderators during life upon condition of their good government; Seventhly, To have a negative or a double, or at least a casting voice, when things come to be voted. Lastly to have these preheminences setled upon them as by a standing law, and as due by right unto their office, I say though they were stripped of all the rest, yea and of many of these too, if you will, yet cannot such an office be lawfull in the Church.

Reas. 1. Because it is a new Ministry, a new standing office which Christ not ordained, but devised by mans will alone, and introduced by his meere will, which is unlawfull upon presuppose all of things delivered, and in part confirmed before.

2. This office devised by man robbeth more or lesse

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the officers ordained by God (if not the Church alſo) of thoſe priviledges wherewith he hath inveſted them, yea it advanceth it ſelfe over them, which to do, is injuſtice and uſurpation.

3 It maketh the Biſhop with his aſſiſtants αλλοτριεπισκοπους, that is To be unwarrntably buſie in other mens Dioceſſe, while as they take upon them to order matters (by way of authority) in other Churches then their owne, which neither by themſelves, nor their Commiſſioners do freely joyn with them in the ſame.

4. By ſuch an Office, the Biſhop at laſt (if not his aſſiſtants alſo) either muſt needs neglect his own flock whiles he (without calling from God) needleſly buſies himſelfe with looking unto other mens. Or elſe muſt commit the care thereof (at leaſt in part) to others which he ſhould not do.

5 Alſo thereby, although the condition of ſome few more eminent men that enjoy the greateſt benefices, and carry the greateſt credit in the Countrey, who in likelihood may become their uſuall aſſiſtants, and who (ſome of them it may be) are high enough already, yet the reſt of the miniſters (with their Churches) ſhall be kept under the hatches ſtill; their condition in regard of miniſteriall power not being much amended.

6 It will hinder (at leaſt in part) the bringing in of the true government of Chriſt and a perfect reformation of the Church, now while it may be obtained in all likelyhood; which ought not to be done.

7 If it be ſaid, that it is no new Miniſtry, but an higher degree of the ſame miniſtery only, yet (beſides all other exceptions) this is as unlawfull as the other. Forasmuch as our Saviour condemnes, and forbids in his Diſciples ſuch ſeeking and accepting of preeminence,

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one of them over another, they being all of the same office, and so of equall power and authority, Man is as lawfull to make new ministries in the Church, as to make new degrees of the same ministrie which God hath not made.

It is also dangerous to us. viz.

Lest in processe of time this petit Episcopacy should by degrees restore and raise up again the present lordly prelacie. And that for these reasons.

Reas. 1. Because (supposing it to be unlawfull as foresaid) one errour naturally begets another, and lesse ever thriveth into a greater, till it come to its height and fulnesse.

2. The rather because by this lesser Episcopacie the greater shall still in part hold possession, and therefore may hope the sooner to recover it selfe againe.

3. This lesser being admitted but as an humane ordinance, and yet lawfull, must needs strengthen the title of the greater, which is an human ordinance too. For if that have right to be in the Church, why not this also? And if this be only cast out because corrupted in the manner of administration, why may it not return againe hereafter (this degenerating, and for the same reason being expulsed) when those corruptions are removed.

4. And so much the more easily, and willingly, for that by the incoming of the greater, in propriety of speech the lesser shall not at all be thrust out, or extinguished, but rather by certaine degrees shall be hoysed up, and augmented to become the greater. And so shall be a gainer, no looser by the same.

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5. Moſt of all if any of the ſame perſons, that formerly have been greater Biſhops, ſhall be pared thus ſmall (unleſſe grace in any of them be wonderfully predominant) their own naturall pride and ambition, the remembrance of their former pompe, honour, and eaſe, the conſideration of their preſent low ebbe, the conceit of their wrongs and indignity they ſuppoſe they have received, the maſſe of wealth, which ſome of them, at the leaſt, have before-hand heaped together, their revengefull and cruell mindes, their contracted and long accuſtomed boldneſſe and impudence, with the aſſiſtance of their friends and favorites. I ſay all theſe remayning and being nouriſhed with the honey dewes of the Princes favour, will ſoone make them to revive and flouriſh againe, and in the end perhaps to raiſe a new ſtorme againſt their oppoſites (if not againſt Church and Kingdome too) rather than either to be unraiſed, or unrevenged.

Nor let us think that we can take a courſe ſo to fence and hedge them in, that they ſhall not range abroad again. For (beſides all other exceptions) in part our own experience, but more fully the experience of our neighbour nation, may informe us, that no ſuch courſe can be taken with them, who are accuſtomed to break all laws, tranſgreſſe all limits, violate all promiſes and oathes, contemne all penalties, and overtop all Magiſtrates at their own pleaſure, and (againſt all oppoſition) to domineere both over Church and commonwealth, as of late they have done, untill now at laſt waxing top-heavie, they have begunne to fall (bleſſed be God) with their own waight.

Position 5. *The utter removall of all Dioceſan Epiſcopacie and all degrees thereof, is, at this time, feizible enough, if men be not wanting to themſelves in the meanes.*

Reaſ. 1. BEcauſe the ſin of that calling, and of ſome chief perſons in that calling, at the leaſt, may now ſeeme to have grown unto its height, and to be fully ripe, fit for the ſickle.

2. God by his Spirit hath long ſtirred up the hearts of his people to pray for the utter removeall thereof, eſpecially of late, in a more then ordinary manner.

3. Yea, and ſome for to beleeve and hope for it too; which cannot but prevaile, and be accompliſhed ere long.

4. The ruine of the great Biſhop of *Rome*, by computation of many learned men, is neere at hand, how then ſhould theſe leſſer Biſhops be farre from theirs, who as Dioceſan Biſhops do hold of him, or at the leaſt, with him. If the maine Sea be dried up, how ſhould the rivulets hold out; if the whole body fall, how ſhould the branches ſtand?

5. Yea, they are fallen already in good part many wayes, and are ſinking daily: And what remaines to be done, is no harder to God then that which is already done: As *Hamans* wife ſaid to him, If *Mordecai* bee a Jew, before whom thou haſt begunne to fall this day, &c.

6. The utter removeall of the Prelats now, is no greater, nor more difficult a work then the Lord hath been wont to do; No, not then he hath been wont to do

to do in the like kinde: They have been caſt out of ſundry kingdomes and States abroad as now with us, yea, and neerer home in *Scotland*: Nay, our ſelves have had experience of Gods power, in delivering us from the authority and tyranny of the Biſhop of *Rome*, from the gorbellied Monks, and Fryars, and the maine body of Popiſh ſuperſtition and hereſie, and what then is this uncircumciſed Philiſtine? I mean the Epiſcopacie which is even already like *Goliah* not rayling, vaunting, fighting, but wounded, groveling, bleeding unto the death.

7. God ſeemes of late to be in a veine of working miracles, and miracles for us, or wonders at the leaſt, as if his hand being once in, he could now do nothing elſe, every day almoſt brings forth ſome ſtrange thing every man we meet with, can relate ſome markable event, as if God were about a new creation, and as if the new heavens and the new earth were neer at hand; of which S. *Iohn* foretelleth *Reva.*

8. Yea, the moſt of thoſe wonders which God hath of late done amongſt us, have been not only for us, but alſo againſt them, as directly tending to their downfall, and to the raiſing and ſtrengthning of our hopes againſt them: Do we not ſee that God is gone out againſt them, as a man of war, let us march after our Captaine, and in the Name of the Lord wee ſhall deſtroy them.

9. We have that aſſiſtance now from our neighbouring Nation in moving for a full reformation of the Church, and utter extirpation of Epiſcopacie, as in former times we never had, and if now neglected, perhaps we never ſhall have again. They do now petition the ſame thing with us, if we will joyn with them,

who knowes what force the united humble desires of two Kingdomes in an honest thing, may have with a gracious and just King; A double cord is not easily broken.

10. We have the Petitions of the most people in the Kingdome, that are best affected, dayly coming from all parts (as it were) with one generall voice against Episcopacy: why should our courage faile, when our number increaseth? Is it not of God, that hath thus wakened the spirits of men, and made the dry bones to stand up, yea to march forward in the face of the enemies, armed with pen, inke, and paper, in stead of powder and shot to pull them down.

11 We have the help of this Honourable Assembly of Parliament, whose piety, prudence, courage, zeale, their speeches, and actions since their sitting, their readinesse to accept petitions, to heare grievances, to call for advice, &c. in favour of Religion, and the Gospel, and good of the Church, do all still invite us to pursue all honest and just requests without base despaire.

12 And which is (under the power and goodnes of God) the greatest advantage of all the rest, our dread Sovereigne his native goodnesse and justice, together with his present most gracious concurrence with them, and incouraging of them in their proceedings hitherto, in this great worke of Reformation of the Church; and redresse of the comon wealth. But suppose that some of the Parliament men and others otherwise eminent in Kingdome were as yet of a contrary minde, though I beleeve they are not so many as is pretended, nor would be so many as they are, if it were not for some fast (though perhaps secret) friends

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of petite Episcopacy. Yet if we would repent of sin and seek the Lord, and lamentably complaine, and humbly sue to them, and bring forth our strong reasons to convince them, & give sage advice to counsell them, &c. who can tell how soone such as are now averse and opposite in his businesse may become favourable nay cordiall and zealous in it.

13. And again suppose there were lesse hope in respect of means and otherwise, then indeed there is, so that in that regard we should be disswaded from enterprising any thing, yet considering on the one side what God is able to do, and hath been wont to do in an exigent for his people, and on the other side the desperate condition that all of us are in, who have appeared in this holy warre against the Bishops office, yea and also of such as have not appeared for them. (For if they get the victory we are sure to suffer more through their irefull and revengefull minds hereafter then hitherto) that if we will not, or cannot attempt any thing with hope, yet wee may do it at least through fear.

Were there no Church-government particularly appointed by God, but that the same were altogether left to the Churches discretion, yet were the Presbyterian government rather to be chosen, then the most moderate Episcopacie that may be devised. *Position. 6.*

Reas. 1. FOr the better keeping out of the greater Episcopacie, and all the mischiefs thereof; (If God would be so mercifull that the same might be removed) lest it should by degrees winde it self in again.

2. To

2. To prevent a vast imparity of the Ministerie b
in power and wealth, whereby else, it will necessa
follow, that of those that are of the same calling, le
ning and pains, &c. yet some shall be hungry (as
Apostle saith) and others drunk, some shal be Lo
others shal be as vassals to them: which is both aga
reason and religion to.

3. To prevent the better all corruption in gove
ment, when it is in many equals, rather then in
chief, and the Moderator is chosen from time to t
a new, then to be one and the same continually,
that during life.

4. For the better welfare of the flock, especi
that part of which the Bishop hath the cure; which
this means else will be neglected, and the wor
preaching will be laid aside, or else turned over t
Curat, whiles the Bishop himself attends to ru
and that of other Churches then his own, as a
honourable imployment. Which opinion and pra
hath been one great means to cause, and colour
cuse our Lordly and idle Prelats.

5. For better commoderation and correspond
with other of the best reformed Churches (who
brace the pure Presbytery, rather then the same m
with a little Episcopacie) and so our greater unit
and amity with them.

FINIS.